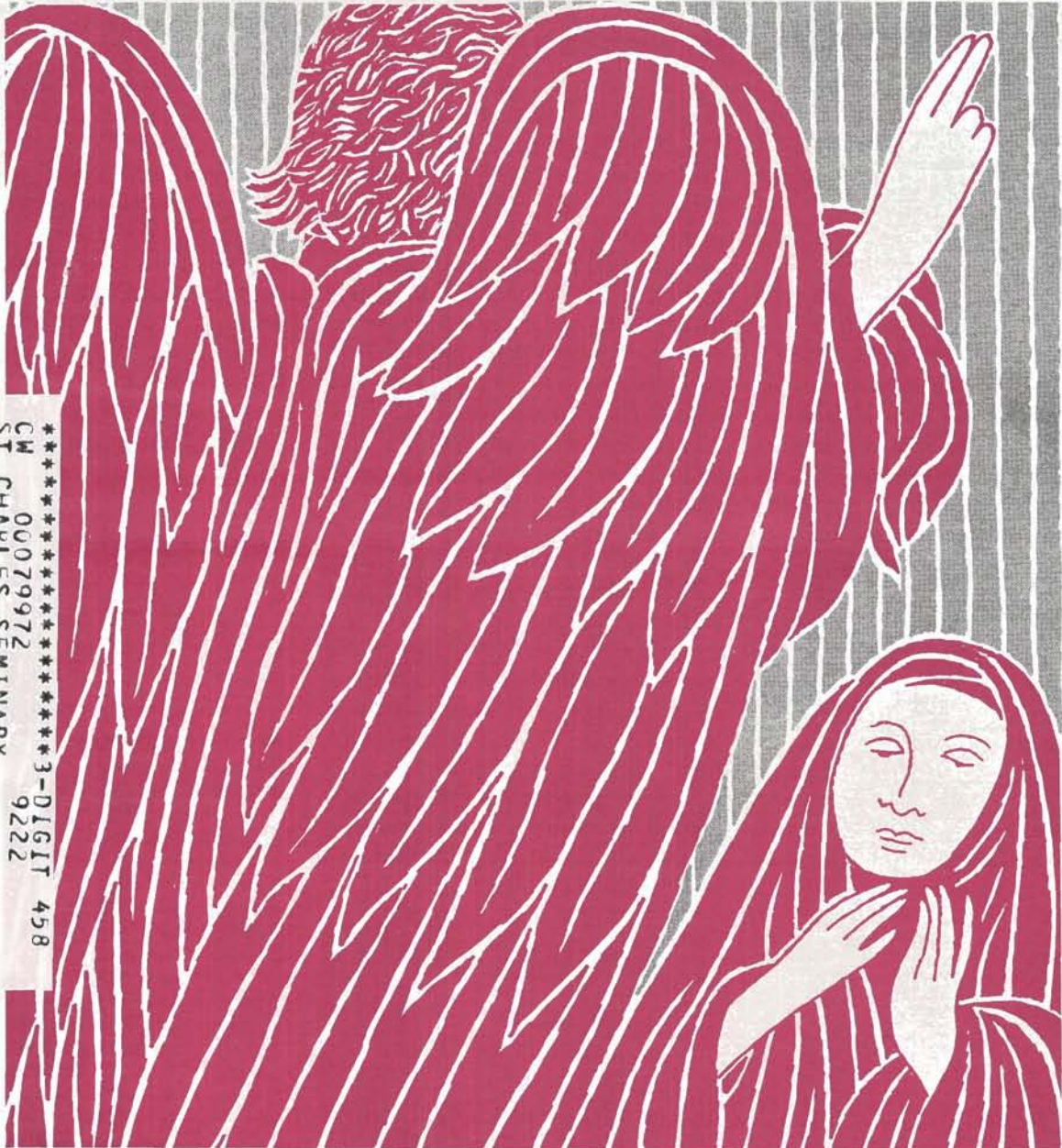


COMMONWEAL

THIS YEAR'S REVELATION: Paul Baumann ■ A CHRISTMAS

Port ■ Ian Stavans

ALPHABET: Neville Braybrooke ■ EL SALVADOR: Robert White



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BOOKS:

FROM BETHLEHEM: Patrick White ■ CHRISTMAS PRESENT: The Editors

CORRESPONDENCE

Danger at the altar

Huntington, N.Y.

To the Editors: Well, that's it. Donald Haynes confesses that male altar servers are hopelessly clumsy. Bridget Balthrop Morton tells us that female altar servers are full of grace [November 9]. Let's go with the Graces.

Haynes's piece was hilarious. Reminded me of the time some clown poured lighter fluid on the charcoal to "speed things up" and we had our own little burning bush to contend with. Males can be dangerous as well as clumsy.

THOMAS F. MADER

That heavenly jazz

Blauvelt, N.Y.

To the Editors: Frank McConnell's tribute to Miles Davis ["The Prince of Darkness," Oct. 25] is a gem. I found myself agreeing with him time and time again in his assessment of both Miles the musician and Miles the man. The man matters little now; it's his great contribution to jazz that will remain. And, although I do not feel quite as strongly as McConnell that jazz is "the only music that matters" (the first recollected sounds of my childhood were equal portions of Caruso and Ellington), I do agree that great jazz performed by masters like Armstrong, Hawkins, Parker, Gillespie, Holiday, Davis, and so many other gifted jazz musicians is surely "proof of the existence of God."

McConnell's closing comments regarding his Saul-of-Tarsus-like conversion from racism moved me deeply also, and are a

tribute to his openmindedness even at that young age. Finally, I suspect there are more jazz lovers who read *Commonweal* regularly than the editors suspect; could you not add an occasional review of jazz to your usual screen, stage, and dance reviews? McConnell might be just the person for the job!

ROBERT P. MINICHIELLO

University's role

Corrales, N. Mex.

To the Editors: Unlike Thomas F. Troy ("Jesuit Colleges Without Jesuits," October 25), I am not an alumnus of a Jesuit institution—but, having spent almost thirty years as a member of the faculty at Georgetown, I find his views merit comment. It is true that there are fewer and fewer Jesuits teaching in Jesuit schools, as there are fewer and fewer Jesuits, period. There are also, as he surmises, fewer and fewer Catholics to be found on their staffs. Why is this so and what does it mean?

One major cause is that undergraduate education throughout the nation has become increasingly specialized and professionalized. Jesuits are no longer hired simply because of who they are (nor, for that matter, are Catholics), but rather in terms of professional credentials and interests. In this respect the undergraduate college is going—probably unfortunately—the way of the law and medical schools which Jesuits have long sponsored.

The basic problem, however, is not personnel but curriculum. In my experience many non-Catholics are more concerned with what is taking place than are most of

their Catholic colleagues. But the basic issue is one for the church as such. What is taking place at the university level is related to disputes in the area of religious education generally, i.e., to what extent does one stress character formation as opposed to theological indoctrination at a time when there is much disarray, to put it mildly, among theologians as to what being Catholic really means.

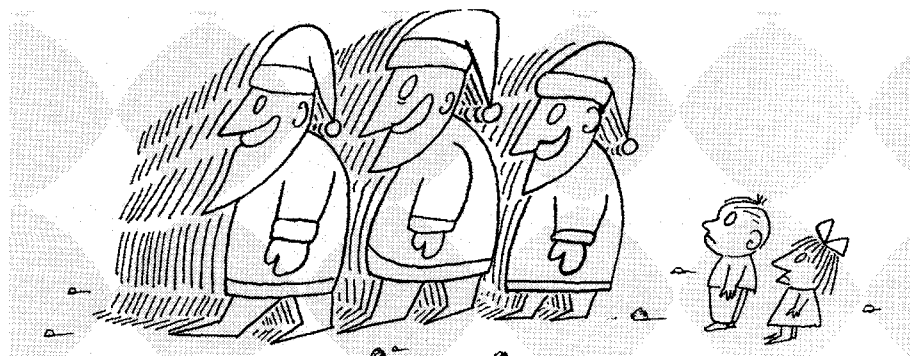
If the university is arguably the institution through which a society assesses its intellectual foundations, the Catholic college or university is where the church should be doing the same thing. Whether, despite his appeals to the intrinsic value of knowledge and research, this is what John Paul II really has in mind would be disputed by many. If the Catholic college does become an arena in which students and faculty can freely discuss the future of Catholic ideas, there may not be so many Jesuits around, but there will be no problem of retaining its identity.

VICTOR FERKISS

How to be a Jesuit

Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editors: The topic of Thomas F. Troy's article has come up in many discussions among myself, other Jesuits, and
(Continued on page 760)



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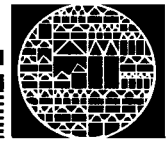
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COMMONWEAL



Christmas present

And they wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a feed box. No! No! Keep that manger. At their annual meeting in November, the U.S. Catholic bishops narrowly averted a trans-mogrification of the Christmas classic to "Away in the feed box/ No crib for a bed." In a flurry of common sense, they retained "manger" in a new edition of the Bible simplified for children. In fact, a poll in Minneapolis showed most youngsters quite conversant with the word "manger" but foggy about "feed box."

The merry season brings on merry thoughts of Christmas pageants and parties, parody versions of songs and stories, and exuberant indulgence—of children especially. And so we are happy the bishops have indulged the children in this matter of mangers.

Another item on the bishops' agenda, a report, "Putting Children and Families First," deserves more attention than the feed-box fracas, and certainly much more than it has received. The report's grim statistics show that greater and greater numbers of children are in need of more than Christmas indulgence.

One of the subtexts of the Christmas story has always been the negligent air in which the world received its savior—"She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn." Who of us, appropriating the images of frescoists and painters, has not conjured up a grander scene: at least, a featherbed feed box; or a star-studded heaven; the subtle shadings of Mary's rich velvet gown; and certainly a more generous response: if only we had been citizens of Bethlehem.

If only! The citizens of Bethlehem have nothing on the citizens of the United States, as "Children and Families First" lays out in some detail. The grim data speak for themselves: abortion (1.6 million annually); infant mortality (40,000 babies under age one die each year); poverty (one in five); hungry children (5.5 million).

That is not all; there are also ancillary causes and effects: In the Western world, the United States has the highest divorce rate, the highest adolescent pregnancy rate, and a teen-age suicide rate triple that of thirty years ago. More teen-age boys die of gunshot wounds than from all natural causes combined. We have a school dropout rate of 25 percent; SAT scores are down by 70 points in the last thirty years; one-fourth of all children live in single-parent homes; mothers and children are an increasing proportion of the homeless.

The bishops speak not just of the desperate needs of so many children, but the need of all for a "secure and stable family life." The report talks not just about the destitute and the working poor, but of the middle class. It laments the racism and discrimination that blight the lives of African-American children, especially those who live in inner cities, but reminds us that most poor children are white and most are from working families. It analyzes the struggles of families not only to feed

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and shelter their children, not simply to secure good schooling and adequate health care, but also to feed the spiritual, psychological, and intellectual hungers of childhood. Programs are important but so are values; individual responsibility and local initiative are irreplaceable, but so is national policy. "No government can love a child and no policy can substitute for a family's care, but clearly families can be helped or hurt.... Government can either support or undermine families as they cope with the moral, social, and economic stresses of caring for children."

The bishops' statement reflects an admirable culling of Catholic social tradition and turns an attentive ear to a growing national consensus: We must support parental responsibility for children while insisting on societal and governmental responsibility to "put children and families first."

In the ever-revelatory "For the Time Being," a Christmas oratorio by W. H. Auden, Herod reflects on the necessity and the burden of ridding the world of this infant Jesus: "Civilization must be saved even if this means sending for the military, as I suppose it does. How dreary.... Oh dear, Why couldn't this wretched infant be born somewhere else?"

The spirit of Herod lives.

MURDEROUS AID

In December 1981, U.S.-trained soldiers in El Salvador, members of the Atlacatl Battalion—the same battalion that murdered the Jesuits and their helpers in 1989—massacred virtually everyone in three villages in rebel-dominated Morazan Province. This past November, the Catholic church in El Salvador, after years of investigative research that met with government obstruction right up to the end, issued an eighty-one-page report listing 794 people by name, all murdered by the Salvadoran Army in Mozote, Cerro Pando, and La Joya. Commenting on the report, Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez of San Salvador called on the courts to take action in the case. Only then, he reasoned, would the nation have the right to ask the families of the victims "to pardon the assassins and open their hearts to reconciliation."

In January 1982, *New York Times* reporter Raymond Bonner traveled to Mozote. What he reported startled the world. But not the Reagan administration. Within days, the president had certified to Congress that the Salvadoran government "is making a concerted effort" to comply with human rights requirements, and that it had achieved "substantial control over all elements of its own armed forces." Flanked by Deputy Secretary for Human Rights Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders told Congress: "There is no evidence to confirm that

government forces systematically massacred civilians in the operations zone."

The church document now clearly substantiates Bonner's original report and puts the lie to the Enders/Abrams testimony. Yet, down to this very moment the U.S. government continues to train and support the Salvadoran military.

That military, and its unrepentant, lawless leadership, remain the chief obstacle to peace in El Salvador (see Robert E. White, p. 741). In another chilling report issued last month, this one in Washington, Congressman Joseph Moakley (D-Mass.), chairman of a special House task force on El Salvador, linked the murder of the Jesuits and their helpers to the highest levels of the Salvadoran military. Based on confidential testimony by "credible members" of the Salvadoran armed forces (some of whom were eyewitnesses), the report says "the decision to murder the Jesuits was made at a small meeting of officers held at the Salvadoran Military School on the afternoon prior to the murders." Those present included Gen. Emilio Ponce, the chief of staff and now minister of defense; Gen. Juan Rafael Bustillo, head of the Air Force; and Gen. Orlando Zepeda, deputy minister of defense. The Moakley report also describes the efforts, at the highest levels, to cover up that meeting and to obstruct the investigation of the murders. Moakley concludes, "I personally find [the task force's] version of events more credible than the alternative," namely, that one lower officer, acting on his own, was responsible for the killings at the Jesuit university.

In training the Atlacatl Battalion and in continuing to supply the Salvadoran military with nearly unlimited resources, the U.S. bears a major share of responsibility for the crimes committed over the last twelve years. Those crimes must not be forgotten. As Archbishop Oscar Romero remarked before his own assassination: "Our missing ones are not missing to God's eyes, and those who have taken them away are present also to God's justice."

ET CETERA

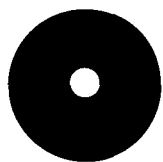
ANY QUESTIONS? "The Flack Pack," an article by James Bennett in *The Washington Monthly* for November, records that reporters asked a total of 1,865 questions at the 103 formal presidential press conferences held from the beginning of the Bush administration till mid-September of this year. By Bennett's count, they asked twice as many questions (twelve) about the president's health as about health care or health education for the rest of America. There were exactly four questions about what the president planned to do to strengthen the public schools, four about AIDS, three about U.S. dependence on foreign oil, two on campaign finance laws, one about the problems of the B-2 bomber, and none about homelessness. There were forty-one questions dealing with the qualifications of John Tower to serve as secretary of defense, more than ten times the number of questions concerned with specific military pro-

grams. In the several months when the nomination of Clarence Thomas was newsworthy, correspondents asked four times as many questions about him as they asked in three years about affirmative action or civil rights. On the other hand, one alert reporter did ask Mr. Bush whether his views on broccoli had cost him any votes.

REPORT ON EL SALVADOR

LET CIVILIANS GOVERN

WHERE DOES THE U.S. STAND?



nly a few short years ago, Central America was the major foreign policy focus for the United States. Today, the Bush administration is turning away, consigning the place to a convenient memory hole. And worse, it has given the Salvadoran peace process, now at a crucial juncture, only lukewarm encouragement.

After more than a decade of U.S.-sponsored war in El Salvador, a UN-supervised cease-fire is tentatively scheduled for shortly before Christmas. The hope is that this armed truce will serve as a prelude to a full-fledged peace agreement. The odds are otherwise. The Salvadoran military insists that the members of the Farabundo Marti Liberation Movement (FMLN) lay down their arms in exchange for governmental commitments. The FMLN, understandably, wants to see not just promises but real compliance before disarming. Pressure from the U.S. could break the deadlock. But in relation to Central America, our government is still mired in cold-war thinking.

In public statements, U.S. officials still indulge in ritual condemnations of Cuban and Nicaraguan support for the FMLN. Salvadoran army hard-liners delight in these statements by U.S. officials, for who can deny the obligation of an army to stamp out subversion by any means? Thus do tired phrases about external interference left over from the Reagan days undermine the peace process the Bush administration claims it supports.

As for the forlorn hope that the U.S. military would teach professional conduct to the Salvadoran army, the influence has, if anything, run the other way. In the Salvadoran military, rank order goes: major, colonel, millionaire. Peace holds few attractions for the swollen Salvadoran army; it is war that buys the condominium in Miami and puts the Mercedes in the garage. Congressman Joe Moakley (D-Mass.) has identified Gen. Emilio Ponce as one of the senior officers most directly implicated in the 1989 murder of the six Jesuit priests. Ponce, who is still a CIA favorite, has bragged, "This war can yet be won." As if to reinforce Ponce's thesis, the Bush administration argues that military aid is needed to strengthen the hand of the government in its negotiations with the FMLN.

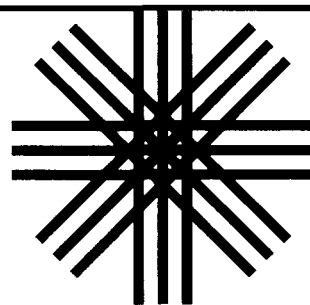
Properly understood, there are two negotiations underway. The first is the official one, between President Alfredo Cristiani's

government and the FMLN. The second, and by far the more important, is between Cristiani and the army. Military assistance simply strengthens the army hard-liners in their determination first to limit the agreements as they are negotiated and then to gut the agreements Cristiani and the FMLN leaders reach.

Skilled UN diplomats searched for months for the elusive formula that would guarantee the safety of the guerrillas after they laid down their arms and reentered civilian society. This was no idle search. Tens of thousands of Salvadorans have met torture and death merely because they sympathized with change.

The FMLN first proposed total demilitarization. The UN softened that proposal but could never get the backing of the Bush administration. Another FMLN initiative called for the integration of the FMLN combatants into the army. It received no support from any quarter.

With these two avenues closed, the UN came up with an ingenious formula that meets the FMLN demand that its combatants be protected. Under this plan, agreed to by the Cristiani government, the military of El Salvador would no longer have power to enforce its will inside the country. It would confine its role to the defense of the nation against external threats. The present dreaded internal security forces, which have strong links to the



THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

Yes, once again, the COMMONWEAL editors, displaying the decisiveness that makes the party of reform sing Hosannas in our name and the Vatican tremble before our querulous indictments, have decided to award not one but two Graymoor Prizes. Our winners this year are an effervescent and cartooning anonymous author(s) from the Poor Clare Colettine Community of Ty Mam Duw in North Wales, and Theodore Pulcini, an Orthodox priest from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Each essay demonstrates the strength of particularity as well as the Christian faithfulness that calls us to ecumenism. The \$1,000 prize has been divided between the two winners. The essays will be published in our January 17, 1992 issue.

We would especially like to thank the Friars of the Atonement for sponsoring the essay contest, which has the important goal of encouraging new ecumenical ideas and perspectives.

army, would be abolished, and a new civilian police force, completely removed from military control, would be established to enforce the laws and maintain domestic order. It would include a significant FMLN presence. As a result, the army would no longer have a pretext to persecute its enemies; and the FMLN presence in the national police force, particularly in the zones traditionally under guerrilla control, would help integrate the combatants into the power structure.

Hurdles remain. A crucial provision of the UN peace framework requires that the army be cleansed of human rights violators. This purging would appear to be the indispensable minimum for El Salvador to reenter the company of civilized nations. The FMLN had demanded not merely dismissals but prosecution. Yet because there have been no apparent pressures from the Bush White House, the Salvadoran military high command feels free to resist even dismissals, proposing instead a "self-purification" that most observers, including the UN negotiators, regard

as an empty promise.

The Bush administration has given at best lukewarm endorsement to the Salvadoran peace process. When the New York agreement was signed in September, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar welcomed it as a breakthrough. Neither President Bush nor Secretary of State James Baker congratulated the parties on what was truly a historic achievement.

As new democratic forces in El Salvador seek to untangle competing demands and needs, the White House should join Congress and send a clear message to El Salvador's military leaders that we expect them to stand down from their position as arbitrator of political power, and to abide by the agreements reached by the elected civilian government and the FMLN. In Central America, as elsewhere, democracy and militarism are incompatible.

ROBERT E. WHITE

Robert E. White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, is president of the Center for International Policy.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

OY! KOUMENISM

ENUFF ALREADY

Bishops representing the jurisdictions that comprise the Orthodox Church in the United States recently voted to suspend relations with the National Council of Churches. Though there has not been a formal or final break, continued relations between the Orthodox and the NCC are being studied by Orthodox theologians.

A lot of people have deplored this apparent weakening of an already relatively weak movement toward Christian unity. The timing is certainly graceless: the suspension was announced during the tenure of the Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky, the first Orthodox president of the NCC. Some perspective is needed, however. What has happened here is significant and may mark a turn in the whole of the ecumenical movement. It indicates, at least, that a new prospect has come into view.

For years people have spoken of "the scandal of a divided Christianity." One argument was that it was impossible for Christianity to evangelize effectively as long as it presented non-Christians with an array of competing claims. There is a

point to be made here, but it needs to be seen in the light of a phenomenon that is interesting and ought to give us pause before deploring it: every one of the great religious traditions is divided. Christianity is not alone. Judaism is divided into Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative branches, and those are just the largest ones. Hinduism is full of varieties of Hinduism—more, probably, than any other religion. Beyond the major Islamic Sunni and Shia branches, there are many Muslim subgroups. Only relatively new religious groups have any obvious unity, and it doesn't last long. Mormonism already has splintered into many branches, and even within the largest branch (the Salt Lake City-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) there are serious divisions.

It always was this way. Christians love to generalize about the kind of Judaism to which Christ came, but it would be better to speak of "Judaisms": there was at least as great a difference between the beliefs of the Sadducees and the Pharisees (a party with which Jesus' teaching in fact had much in common) as there is between today's Reform and Orthodox Judaism; there was also the Essene faction, which

may have influenced John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. Christianity itself was almost instantly challenged by gnosticism, and soon had to deal with Marcion's denial of the real continuity between the Old and New Testaments, Montanist claims of prophetic inspiration, and a series of schisms over church discipline in areas involving such questions as the reconciliation of lapsed Christians (could anyone, after baptism, be restored to Communion after serious sin?) and the baptisms performed by heretics (did they count?).

Looking at this fragmentation, it is easy to see why rationalists can argue against any religion on the grounds that all claim to be true—but there are so many of them, saying so many different things. What anyone who studies comparative religion notices, however, is the remarkable degree of consensus: human beings are not as they are meant to be; something (illusion, the Fall) separates us from truth; ordinary understanding needs enlightening. Forms of monastic asceticism are remarkably similar in religions as different as Buddhism and Catholicism. As you look at the testimony of the mystics in every tradition a remarkable consensus can be found in their descriptions of what an experience of the holy is like.

It can be argued that there is something that draws all human beings, and our efforts to describe it have been inadequate precisely because what draws us can't be put into words. Justin Martyr and some other early Christian apologists saw this at work

in Plato as well as in the Old Testament. The fact that it can't be put into words, and yet we must speak of it, is the source both of religious division and of the continuing presence of ancient religious traditions, despite their fragmentation. Neither the need itself, nor the remarkably unified insights at the base of it, can be dismissed. Christianity makes the claim that in Jesus Christ this yearning has been answered: God's life has been shared with us, and because human communion with God, the source of life, has been restored, death itself is overthrown, and its power can no longer govern us.

In the face of fragmentation Jesus prayed "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." When the unity of the early, predominantly Jewish, church was threatened over divided opinion about the obligations required of Gentile converts to Christianity, a council was convened in Jerusalem, and Acts reports that it announced its decision with the words, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...."

The belief that the Spirit could guide the church into unity was essential, and was the basis of the church's efforts to resolve the first Christian centuries' great controversies over Christ and his relationship to the Father. Even after the great schism that divided East from West and the trauma of the Protestant Reformation, even after sacramental communion had been broken, the Christian consensus was in many ways remarkable.

The recognition of this fact was the basis for Christian ecumenism. The Christological formulas of Chalcedon could be accepted by Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Calvinists, as could the language of the Bible. The differences between Catholics and Orthodox and Calvinists and Lutherans were all important enough to make communion impossible, but what made the dawning of ecumenism wonderful was an understanding that disagreement at least did not need to mean demonization, and that much could be learned by a patient attention to what the other had meant to say all along (and not what we, at our end of the polemic, needed them to be saying to reassure ourselves of our righteousness). There was great encouragement at the dawn of the

ecumenical movement, when Protestants, previously fragmented and suspicious of one another, were able to unite, and were joined by the Orthodox. The Orthodox always made it clear that they considered themselves the apostolic church; but the recognition of common Christian ground was sufficient reason for working together. With Vatican II, Catholics entered the ecumenical atmosphere, and for the first time since the schism between East and West a certain cordiality became the norm, not the exception, in almost all forms of Christian dialogue. The Catholic church, however, has not entered the World Council of Churches. It remains an observer, friendly but not part of the institution, participating on WCC commissions without joining it as a member.

You can only discover those things you have in common once, and then the thrill wears off: this is one reason the ecumenical movement seems to have lost its steam. But there is another, and it is the more important one. The problem is that within mainstream Protestantism there has been a movement away from what can only be called Protestant orthodoxy. When at the 1991 WCC meeting in Canberra a Protestant theologian can equate the Holy Spirit with the spirits of ancestors and the spirits of nature—and can be applauded for her performance—a decisive movement away from the very agreement that gave the ecumenical movement its reason for being has been made. This is a movement back to a

place somewhere before Chalcedon, a regression.

When biblical language itself (a reference to God as Father, for example) becomes problematic, and the baptismal forms that are part of the Gospels are changed accordingly, it is easy to see why some people—not only the Orthodox—are uneasy. The people who feel comfortable about moving away from the traditional language assume that it is so culturally determined that it may be changed for what seem to be good moral and cultural reasons; but they also apparently assume that this language is determined entirely by its culture, that the Judaism of Jesus is somehow accidental, that his unique reference to God as Father is mere patriarchal conditioning.

The central assumption here is that the dominant secular culture has more to teach us, with all its most passionate and essentially political concerns, than the common trinitarian and biblical tradition which, many Christians thought for a while, was really shared at levels that made some degree of common understanding possible. The same people who identified the spirits of the ancestors and nature with the Holy Spirit were offended that Orthodox Christians would not share Communion with them. Without getting into a theological discussion on intercommunion itself, it is hard to understand what eucharistic Communion can mean to people who are, frankly, this careless about what has been handed on to them.

HAVE STRAPS, WILL PUBLISH

Early in October we sent letters to all individual subscribers asking them to supply straps for our boots so that we could use them to pull *Commonweal* out of a dawning financial crisis caused by rising costs. By "straps" we meant money to buy the equipment needed for desktop publishing—a means of achieving a significant and permanent reduction in the costs of publication.

As most donors have already been informed, the appeal succeeded. The money is on hand, with some to spare; the equipment has been ordered, and some of it has already arrived, though it's still in boxes. (The production editor looks at the boxes with a mix of eagerness and dread.)

And so, at least for the moment, the dawning crisis has disappeared into a golden sunset. We are most grateful—both for the money and for this further evidence that people want *Commonweal* to stick around.

Now, a further appeal. Pray for the production editor, and for the technophobes among us who must learn to cope. If your prayers work, you won't be able to tell when the new system goes into effect.

AWAITING THIS YEAR'S REVELATION

PAUL BAUMANN

CHRISTMAS, OBSTETRICIANS & 156,436 PLASTIC TOYS

We have two beautiful and affectionate children, both blessed with good health, tolerable personal idiosyncracies, and their mother's luminous dark eyes. My wife is expecting our third child sometime between Christmas and New Year's—we did our Christmas shopping early, and spent well beyond our means! So Christmas approaches this year with more than its usual sense of hallowing life in the cradle.

When my wife was pregnant with our daughter Sarah (now nearly six and perfectly healthy), a blood test (called an Alphafetoprotein [AFP] test) indicated an increased statistical possibility of Down's syndrome. We went for amniocentesis. Abortion was not a consideration, but we thought it would be better to know. It took the hospital six weeks to get us the amniocentesis results. Those were very gloomy weeks. My life has demanded few heroic sacrifices, and I knew I wouldn't have the strength to meet such a challenge—I only hoped the strength would be given to me should I need it. Such thoughts are with me again this year.

Despite her thirty-nine-ish age, my wife didn't bother with the blood test or amniocentesis this time. What difference would it make? She's had an ultrasound, and the baby looks healthy. But there are no guarantees, and our excitement over the prospect of a new child is muted. We have been chastened by our brush with scientific fortune-telling. Age and experience also have a lot to do with it. We're worried we've sentimentally repressed memories of the crying, the spitting up, the diapers, and the endless paraphernalia. We also both work, and can barely keep house and home together as is. And things are already crowded. It may be impossible to accommodate three children, two adults, a Rasputin-like thirteen-year-old dog, and 156,436 plastic toys in this house. (My books stay!)

But I think we also sense a certain social isolation, especially in a world where having children is seen as a highly individual and largely economic decision. Determined to avoid the fecundity of their parents, people my age seem to greet each child as a project, an exotic plant to be cultivated only in the most favorable

and pristine conditions. Since we are less confident of the world we have brought them into, we hover over our children more anxiously than our parents did over us. Of course birth control and the self-sufficiency it permits is the overwhelming reason children seem to be more gifts to oneself than gifts from God. In no longer being a tyrannical inevitability nature affixes to sex, children are increasingly regarded as extensions of their parents' essentially self-willed existence. "Did you, ah, I mean, was it, you know, planned?" was the reaction of many people to our admittedly sheepish announcement. Implicit in this query is the suggestion that an "unplanned" child is in some way a superfluous child. Others see a large family as an unjustifiable personal extravagance. Still, I think it is hard to find a woman, even today, who does not feel in some way touched by a very personal creator when she first learns she has conceived a child.

Of course I worry about the new baby's health. We have been very lucky, and feel a little guilty about having a third child. Relatives and friends struggle with infertility. Other friends have



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a child, born on the same day as our son, with multiple disabilities. Aren't we just pushing our luck? I think such fears and suspicions are more prevalent in a time when abortion is readily available and therefore a damaged child is seen as literally unnecessary. Or, as the libertarians like to say, why should society be burdened with the expensive task of caring for the handicapped? Leon Kass, the physician and ethicist, has written about our misguided search for "perfect" babies. Much of our worry over birth defects is exaggerated, Kass writes, a product of technological expectations that eventually will extinguish what is uniquely human in our lives. There is something horribly dehumanizing in the technologizing of procreation, he warns, especially in the moral climate created by abortion.

I think he's right, and bringing a third child into the world has made me think about it again. (The editor's request for a Christmas piece on the impending nativity also helped.) The men who delivered our first two children, both by caesarian section, are abortionists. I expressed some discomfort over this at the time, but my wife is not Catholic, rural Connecticut does not abound in obstetricians, and, finally, it was her decision to make. There is a lot of talk about partnership in pregnancy and childbirth. "We are pregnant," is the euphemistic line. But "we," I can report unequivocally, are never pregnant. It is still the woman, not the man, who suffers the pain, takes the risks, and makes the bodily sacrifices to bring forth new life. My wife "knows" our children in a way I never will. Even if I could (which I can't), I was not about to dictate what doctors she could use.

For this pregnancy my wife has chosen a new obstetrician, however. Several factors were involved in her decision, but certainly one was an acute unease with the demeanor and philosophical creed of at least one of her former doctors, an outspoken defender of abortion rights and, as it turned out, small families. A few years after Sarah was born, we read a letter this physician wrote to the local newspaper complaining about the increase in births among baby boomers. He argued that no family had the moral right to have more than two children, especially not "yuppies," who notoriously consume a disproportionate amount of the world's wealth and resources. I come from a family of five children, and I found the good doctor's moral preening both amusing and offensive, if not downright Orwellian. My wife, who is the daughter of Holocaust survivors and therefore whose extended family doesn't extend too far, thought the doctor a bit preemptive. The idea that this pseudo-eugenic scheme had been endorsed by someone whose job it was to bring babies into the world made it seem even more bizarre.

But I wasn't surprised. As a newspaper reporter, I had done a series of articles on abortion. Our obstetrician was outspoken and politically active, and a natural person to interview. He speaks with real moral passion, and he told me he was willing to go to jail to protect a woman's right to abortion. As a young doctor in New York City he had seen too many women die from botched illegal abortions. Sex education, contraceptives, and family planning were the answer, he readily admitted. But abortion was a necessary evil given society's resistance to frank talk about sex and the inevitability of human error.

Much of what he said made a good deal of sense, especially when contrasted to a local monsignor I had interviewed about adoption who talked about the evil of contraception. But there was something slightly askew and eerily impersonal about the doctor's views. Class and intellectual snobbery were part of it, but the larger part was a quirky sense of rectitude and moral mission. It was an intriguing mixture of Emersonian notions of self-reliance and an almost oriental fatalism. He was a fierce individualist whose ideas about the nature and value of individual life were remarkably fuzzy. As far as the doctor was concerned, if there was any mystery in the world it was best not to make a fuss about it, lest you be thought weak or self-indulgent. As human beings we were masters of our own fate. This became clear when I asked him if he thought abortion was killing.

"There is just no doubt in my mind that every egg and sperm is human," he said, "it's individual, it's alive, and has the potential of becoming a human being. But I don't accord the same rights to an egg and a sperm or their combination that I do to an infant. And I don't accord the same rights to an infant that I would to an adult."

"Life is a continuum," he added, "and it does not begin with an egg and a sperm, it began millions of years ago and, as far as my personal view, we are all part of the same organism. Essentially we are all hitched to one another, but our health very much depends on control of our reproduction. And reproduction that makes people unhealthy, whether it's mentally or physically, hurts everyone. I have no doubt I am taking a degree of human life every time an abortion is done, but I wouldn't do them unless I thought I was actually giving more to human life than I was taking away."

Seeing the "religion" behind at least this one abortion activist's political stance was instructive. Needless to say, I was stunned by this answer; by the well-mannered thoughtfulness wedded to a genial inhumanity. As far as I was concerned, spirit and matter had drifted a little too far apart in the doctor's Olympian perspective. I don't know whether the aristocratic pretension or the grandiose scientism annoyed me more, but it was one of those moments when your Catholicism surges through you like adrenalin in the aftermath of a shock. I read the doctor's statement to a number of colleagues at the newspaper, expecting them to share my sense of disbelief. But almost no one found it shocking or even disturbing. Indeed, a group of male reporters exchanged stories about the abortions they had paid for before *Roe v. Wade*. Each shook his head thankfully over having been saved from the incalculable consequences of an unwanted child.

I don't doubt that unwanted children are a poor foundation for a marriage, although I know of some evidence to the contrary. I was never faced with such a choice, and I don't know how I would have resolved it when I was nineteen. Whom would I have listened to? Whom would I have turned to for help? Looking back, the answers are not encouraging. But I do know the world is a more varied place and life a more curious odyssey than I thought when I was nineteen and the adult world loomed over me like a impermeable iron-gray sky.

I also know that if there is one thing I believe, it is that we

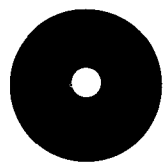
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On learning this history, some Canadians protested that their financial help had gone to the project.

One of our Sunday walks took us along the valley between Battir and Jerusalem. The old French railway line, built in 1892, follows the valley floor; two trains a day still run down this scenic route from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. In this valley, called the Nahal Refaim, we scrambled over the ruins of Walaje. We saw the now familiar prickly pears, stunted olive trees, and the foundations of solid stone buildings, partially hidden under vegetation.

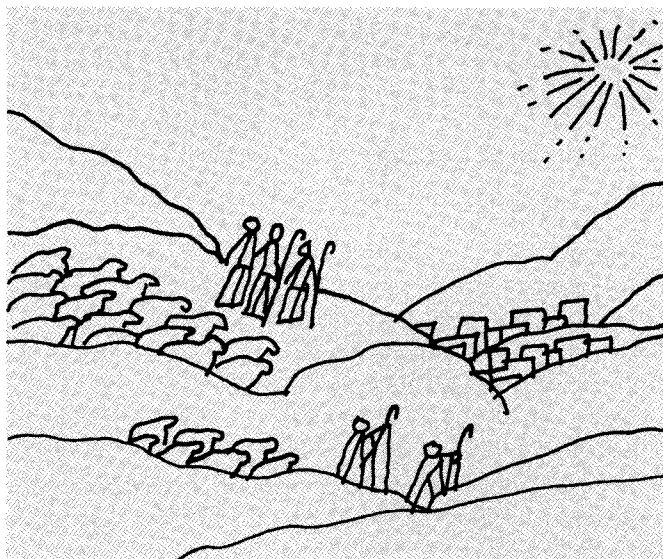
Student friends at Bethlehem University had explained that their families once lived in Walaje. They will tell you how their relatives were driven out after the '48 war and their houses destroyed. Our hike illuminated their stories. Looking across the valley of Nahal Refaim we could see the scattered houses of the present village of Walaje on the West Bank side of the green line, where the Walaje villagers fled and were fortunate enough to find land to rebuild their lives within a mile of their destroyed homes.



On Sunday, November 3—two days after the beginning of the Middle East peace talks in Madrid—three of us set out to walk the hills and wadis in the Shephelahs near Bet Shemesh. An English colleague drove us up through the Palestinian town of Beit Jala. As our car climbed the hill we could see children swarming across the main street. We were concerned at first because they blocked the road at a point where Israeli settlers' cars are sometimes stoned—and they were stopping the passing cars, both those with yellow Israeli plates and those with Palestinian blue plates. Our car had yellow plates but displayed bold Red Cross emblems. The youngsters gathered round the car shouting, in both Arabic and English, "Peace, peace!" At the same time they tucked olive branches under the windshield wipers and offered branches to us through the windows. Elsewhere on the West Bank, we learned, astonished soldiers had responded positively to the Palestinians' gestures for peace.

Our walk that day took us down a wadi through attractive Mediterranean forest growth from an Israeli settlement called Bar Giora to the disused railway station in the ravine below. On our return we discovered in the undergrowth signs of streets and houses of another Palestinian village on the crest of the hillside. The ubiquitous prickly pears were there in abundance, along with the remnants of olive groves and terraced fields. We stood surveying the scene in silence. Then someone recalled that the week before we had walked through a village called Battir. It was similarly situated, but otherwise the difference was all too apparent. Here we were standing on ruins; in Battir, on the West Bank side of the green line, there was a living, thriving Palestinian village.

"Prickly pears and peace talks, that's what I'll call this chapter," I said suddenly to my companions. I had been struggling for days to find a way of writing about the opening of the peace conference in Madrid. In my mind I could see and hear Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir on television as he delivered his opening



speech at the conference. But now, standing on the site of another destroyed Palestinian village, I could not help wondering how different people could hold such divergent views of historical events. In particular, though I could hardly be surprised by his interpretation of the crucial events surrounding the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, his perspective excluded what I had seen for myself during our walks.

The history of that time is still a battlefield, but no longer a one-sided one. Recently, well-known Israeli writers and scholars have reexamined the long-held Israeli claims that it was the Arabs alone who started the 1948 war, that the Palestinians fled on orders of their own leaders, and that it was never the intent of the Zionists to expel Palestinians from their homeland. Claims of distortions in the Israeli accounts were lodged by early scholars, such as Erskine Childers and Walid Khalidi; present-day Israeli revisionists continue the argument now. Tom Segev, Benny Morris, and Simha Flapan have conducted research into sources ignored or overlooked by Zionist writers. But, according to the American researcher Michael Palumbo, even the revisionists have not yet explored all available sources: BBC and CIA monitoring of Middle East broadcasts, United Nations archives housing reports of observers in the field, archives in the Vatican.

It is, in fact, dubious indeed that a complete and disinterested account acceptable to all will ever be achieved—or that any such achievement would make a difference. In Madrid, the head of the Palestinian delegation, Haidar Abdul Shafi, tried to shift the argument away from history in his address to the peace conference when he said: "We seek neither an admission of guilt after the fact, nor vengeance for past iniquities, but rather an act of will that would make a just peace a reality."

Among Palestinians, debate raged over whether that was the proper stance to take in the peace talks. Their delegates returned from Madrid amidst euphoria, but for many in the territories this joy did not reflect the reality of the situation. On the campus in Bethlehem, many students expressed misgivings. Faisal Husseini came to speak on behalf of the leadership at Madrid. Dr. Riyad Malki, a supporter of the hardline Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was severely critical of the delegation's

stance. While Faisal Husseini spoke—hunched over the microphone, trying to hold the attention of the university audience—hooded PFLP activists plastered the walls with pictures of their leader, George Habash. The scene was a vivid enactment of the inevitable conflicts existing on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as Palestinians attempt to break with their recent past and move to a different future.

It was also a true novelty. It's likely that few of the more than 1,000 students on hand had ever experienced this kind of debate before, with their leaders actually addressing them. Husseini talked about political pragmatism as the key to participation in the peace talks; more radical groups either rejected the negotiations altogether or were sharply critical of the tactics adopted by their official spokespersons. But, apart from the initial flurry of poster-pasting, the two-hour meeting was orderly and calm. The students listened intently, and many took part in the question period following the two main speeches.

I stood in the large auditorium fascinated. Enclosed within these protecting walls, Palestinians were free to debate with their leaders and one another. An Israeli reporter from the *Jerusalem Post* noted: "Here there had been no demonstrations, no clashes, and no confrontations. Instead there was amicable debate." Perhaps, I thought, this process might spread throughout the occupied territories.

There was, however, another reality. Outside the campus Israeli soldiers had surrounded the university. Troops were just twenty yards away on the roof of the neighboring school for the blind, pointing their automatic weapons toward the courtyards and gardens where some students sat talking. Roadblocks had cut off the university from the outside world. Many students and staff were incensed at the way some soldiers had torn up students' identification cards as they came to the campus. (Without ID cards, Palestinians cease to exist. When they must report to the military governor for new cards, they are required to pay a fine of more than \$60.)

And yet, there had been a change, though no one can say how long it will last. The fact of this forum is exceptional. Israeli military law under occupation forbids meetings or gatherings of more than ten persons. Had Palestinian political leaders attempted to come to Bethlehem University in such an open way on previous occasions, the Israeli army might well have closed the campus. True, the army still maintains a threatening presence, and Molotov cocktails are still sometimes tossed at the Bethlehem police station. But against this backdrop of violence, the *intifada* may be taking on a new dimension.

That Sunday evening, back at the university, I found a text on botany with a passage describing *Opuntia ficu-indica*, the prickly pear. Its habitat, the text confirmed, is dry and rocky, and its stems carry bristling groups of sharp spines. But it does have bright yellow flowers and edible brick-red fruit, "the size of a hen's egg."

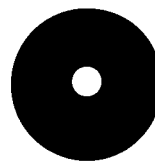
I looked again at the opening speeches at the Madrid peace conference and, rereading Mr. Shamir's intransigent address, I found such hopeful passages as: "We must live without war, without bloodshed. Judaism has given the world not only the

belief in one God, but the idea that all men and women are created in God's image." And Haidar Abdul Shafi, chief of the Palestinian delegation, in his poetic speech: "Let us light the candle of peace and let the olive branch blossom. Let us celebrate the rituals of justice and rejoice in the hymns of truth, for the awe of the moment is a promise of the future, which we must redeem."

Were these only rhetorical flourishes, or did these men really mean what they said? When I see clusters of prickly pears on the hillsides of the Shephela in the future, the images that come to mind will not be only those of thorns, barbed wire, and bulldozers. I will hope to see blossoms yielding a harvest of fruits yellow and purple; Palestinians and Israelis, all men and women created in God's image, "standing tall among the community of nations."

SCREEN

OBSESSION OVERREACHES SCORSESE'S 'CAPE FEAR'



Obsessives are more immediately fascinating than "normal" people because they enact their psyches. (They ultimately become much less interesting for the very same reason.) But to value obsessives over others just because of the fascination they exude is obscene. Thus, *Cape Fear* is an obscene movie.

Martin Scorsese's film is a remake of the Gregory Peck-Robert Mitchum thriller of the early sixties, but both movies derive from the John D. MacDonald novel *The Executioners*. The title is grimly apt for the story. Sam Bowden, a lawyer so humane and scrupulous that his senior partners have shunted him away from their more ruthless dealings, is approached by a man from his past: Max Cady, a rapist whom Sam both apprehended and helped to convict fourteen years previously. Now the released Cady threatens to rape Bowden's wife and barely pubescent daughter and to kill his two little sons. Bowden takes legal steps but without effect because the ex-con cleverly uses the legal system for his own ends. The lawyer then takes more sordid measures such as having his tormentor tailed and then assaulted by thugs, but these don't work either because Cady is cunning and tough. Finally, after the ex-con nearly kills one of Bowden's sons, the lawyer tells his wife that they must murder Cady themselves. And they do so. When Sam looks down at the criminal's body and realizes that "he had turned this elemental and merciless force into clay and dissolution," the reader shares his relief and even his exultation. The novel works in a very simple, straightforward way because, through his superb craftsmanship, the author makes you share his admiration and pity for the resourceful victims, and his loathing for, and fascination with, the ingenious psychotic.

Martin Scorsese is interested only in obsessives. That is why *Mean Streets*, *Raging Bull*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and

the "Life Lessons" episode of *New York Stories*, all featuring driven protagonists, are the best movies this amazingly gifted man has made and are among the best films of the last two decades. Scorsese can engulf you in the tyrannical passions of his heroes.

But the obsessive in the MacDonald story isn't its hero but its villain. So the director devotes all his skill and cinematic flair to making a character conceived by MacDonald as a clever psychopath into a magnetic, quasireligious seeker after truth, a person who feels so unjustly treated by Bowden that he determines not only to avenge himself but to teach the lawyer the very meaning of suffering and even urges his victim to read the Book of Job in preparation for the travails to come.

Now, if Scorsese had been content with this single alteration of the story, he might have achieved something coherent and truly powerful. But he is so besotted by Cady's will-to-power that he turns the character, quite literally, into a superman. This Cady not only read law books and built up his physique in prison but can endure boiling water flung into his face without wincing; can be smashed over the head six times with crowbars without losing consciousness, coordination, or cool; knows the collected works of Henry Miller from cover to cover, etc.

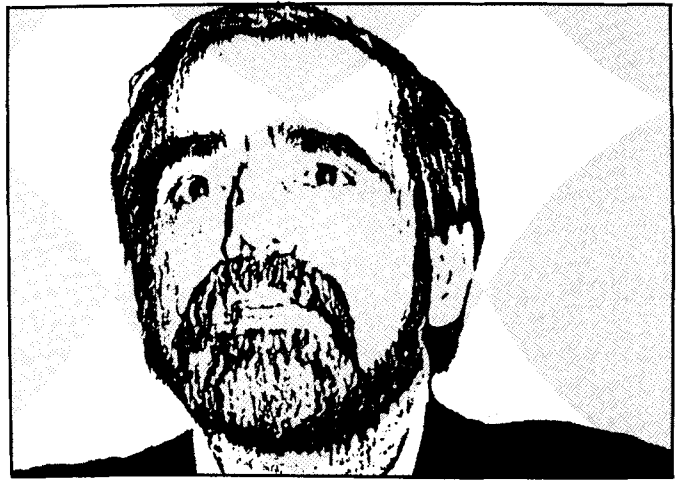
In brief, Max Cady is the Master of the Universe, but what does a moviemaker do with the master when he has to be killed off at the end of the movie? The Bowdens' daughter sets him on fire, but Cady doesn't burn. Bowden smashes him over the head with rocks (that's how Peck subdued Mitchum in the other movie), but Cady's head doesn't bust. Finally, a hurricane at sea, a sinking boat, and being handcuffed to the submerging wreck combine to do in this demigod of recidivism and, perhaps needless to add, he goes under speaking in tongues.

What does Scorsese make of the people who must fight Cady off? In the answer to this question we discover what is truly obscene about *Cape Fear*.

In this version Bowden isn't the one who apprehended and testified against Cady in the rape case that sent him to jail; he is the lawyer who defended the rapist and who deliberately botched the defense. A humane motive is given for this legal impropriety, yet Scorsese uses every device in his director's repertoire to make Bowden look like a worm who deserves all that befalls him.

First and foremost among these devices is the way Nick Nolte has been directed to play the lawyer. In the 1962 *Cape Fear*, Gregory Peck invested the lawyer with his usual stiff dignity, shakeable under pressure but never quite undermined. Scorsese isn't having any of that. Even before Cady moves in, Nolte makes Bowden an uninteresting mediocrity. And once the pressure is on, he immediately disintegrates. Never once are we allowed to feel that this man is going through hell because he loves his family. Rather, he is being put through hell because he is a man living with a dirty little secret that will out.

And Bowden's family has contempt for him *even before Cady appears on the scene*. Mother and daughter (the sons have been eliminated in this adaptation) treat the lawyer with a breezy contempt as a slick shyster whose successful practice keeps the household well stocked. As Mrs. Bowden, Jessica Lange, in a



performance that is one lengthy sneer, never once gives her mate a look of love or pity or commiseration. Once the pressure is on, the pair spend a lot of time screaming at each other hysterically and this acrimony produces revulsion in the daughter who withdraws to her room and covers her ears with headphones. But doesn't the daughter realize the agony her parents are undergoing? Well, no, because Nolte's Bowden is such a fool that he doesn't fully reveal to the girl the danger she's in. Later, after she's had a brush with Cady (an attempted rape of the girl's mind rather than her body which is easily the best scene in the movie and which, in fact, belongs in a better film), the child is so manhandled by her father that the viewer may think she's in more danger from him than from the rapist. And this gives rise to a question which haunts me: Does Martin Scorsese think a child is in more danger from her middle-class family than from the most brutal of criminals?

Robert De Niro lends magnetism and even a perverse charm to Cady. In the earlier *Cape Fear*, Robert Mitchum, giving arguably the best performance of his career, played Cady close to the author's conception as an utterly self-enclosed personality, meanly taunting and self-satisfied. But De Niro turns Cady into a character out of Flannery O'Connor: full of fire and brimstone and a murderous desire to fulfill the will of an utterly vengeful, loveless, pitiless God. De Niro fleshes this out with his hillbilly accent, smile-slitted eyes, and quizzical tilt of the head. De Niro, even as he torments the people in front of him, seems to be looking over their heads at an angry deity who is cheering his agent on.

The Bowdens, on the other hand, constitute your typical, easy-going, secularistic, materialistic, agnostic, drifting American family. They just want to live and let live. And, for this very reason, Scorsese hates them and punishes them with Cady, a man with a mission. For all his ferocity, he is Scorsese's arm of God and that is why the director is able to make only De Niro's character a compelling one. In this filmmaker's world, it's not what you do that counts, but whether or not you are doing it in the service of a big cause. I certainly hope Scorsese never makes a movie about international terrorism.

But the late John D. MacDonald gets his posthumous revenge. The skeleton of *The Executioners* still exists within the body

of this *Cape Fear*. And the skeleton rejects the body. The story is still, even after all of Scorsese's hocus-pocus, a tale of a rapist tormenting innocents. The audience still wants to see Cady brought down and the Bowdens saved. The trouble is, because the Bowdens have been so grotesquely reduced and Cady so grotesquely glorified, the audience's simple need to see virtue vindicated and evil punished is frustrated. Instead of getting a thriller, they must sit through a movie of uncontrolled, crackpot complexity.

Cape Fear isn't a negligible failure because Scorsese's cinematic expertise doesn't allow him to produce anything weak and pusillanimous. This movie is, rather, an extraordinary failure which grips the viewer not with suspense but with cinematic hysteria and stomach-churning violence. It is powerfully loathsome even when it is patently absurd. It is the work of a man who has lost all contact (if he ever had it or even wanted it) with the beauty of everyday life and with the concerns of nonobsessed people. It is the work of a man who has spiritually mutilated himself in the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment. *Cape Fear* is a very low point in the career of America's greatest filmmaker.

RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

INFECTIOUS GROUPINGS

'DISTANT FIRES' & 'BOYS'

Kevin Heelan's *Distant Fires* takes place on an unfinished upper floor of a beach hotel being built in Ocean City, Maryland—presumably the kind of construction site on which the playwright worked for three summers in the early 1970s. Hovering over the action is the smoke rising from the fires set during the race riots in Cambridge, July 24-26, 1967. In 1969, H. Rap Brown (whose name keeps coming up in the play) was tried for his part in the incident. These fires are distant by more than twenty years; yet the program says, "Time: the present." It is not a misnomer. *Distant Fires* is not a historical play. It is not even a reportorial play in the present; who would be building a hotel in the 1990s? The seeds may come from Heelan's past, but the tensions among the characters are recognizable in the present.

The play, which was first produced by the Hartford Stage in 1986 under the Dramatists Guild Foundation's New Plays Program, finally reached New York in an Atlantic Theater production. Well-acted, well-directed, well-designed, well-received, the production extended its original off-Broadway run, but even so the play will be gone by the time this review appears unless, as rumor has it, *Distant Fires* gets picked up for further exposure at Lincoln Center, which the play certainly deserves.

It is a men-at-work play (like David Storey's *The Contractor*) in which five workers—three black, two white—pour and spread concrete, while they joke, complain, protest, accuse, and protect

one another. Heelan expertly handles the emerging and conflicting personalities of the individuals, but the play's greatest strength is in the presentation of the group. One can believe that these are men doing a real job and borrowing what strength they can get from one another.

There are no Rap Brown activists here. Although the blacks among them have felt the indignities that led to the fires in Cambridge, they and their white fellow workers are fueled by personal rather than larger social concerns. Foos is a whiner and a drinker, angry at being short-changed by white society, unable to understand why he has not been rewarded for the work that he avoids doing; he is the most articulate about the wrongs blacks suffer and with reason since, a resident of Cambridge, he has been picked up and roughed up by the police who mistake him for one of the rioters. Unlike Foos, Thomas—momentarily in charge of the group while the lazy, well-connected white crew boss is away—is convinced that by working conscientiously he can move onward and upward in the best American tradition. Between the two of them is Raymond, an older man, who has chosen to do only the work demanded—which he does well—and with no expectations beyond the immediate job to take his comfort in personal pleasures. Of the whites, Beauty, who is proud of his body and his sexual exploits, is closer in spirit to Raymond than to Thomas, with whom he competes for a promotion to bricklayer. Angel, the college-bound temporary who got the job through his father's connections, is a likable boy trying to be one of the men and inevitably is the butt of most of the jokes. It is interesting that Heelan, who is black and who must have had a somewhat similar role in the crews he worked with in his own summer-vacation days, has made the character white.

There is a sixth character, the contractor in charge of the project, whose sole concern seems to be the job and who is unable to show overtly his sympathy for Thomas when he gets burned by the distant fires. A bricklayer is to be hired, which means a union card for the chosen man, and although Thomas is much praised when he tries for the job, the bricklayers, made nervous by that smoke from Cambridge, choose Beauty, who is willing to step down for Thomas until the contractor makes clear that Thomas will not get the job in any case. With this revelation, the characters explode, each in his own way, but at the end the work goes on and the group seems to be re-forming. Heelan has suggested that his play offers a metaphor for racial harmony, and I suppose it does, but the ending is a great deal darker, sadder, more painful than the opening.

A close-knit group is also at the heart of David Feldshuh's *Miss Evers's Boys*, a play that has been in process since 1986 and has been moving from one regional theater to another since its 1989 debut at Baltimore's Center Stage. I saw it at a recent production at the Philadelphia Theatre Company. Feldshuh, a physician as well as a director and playwright, has used the celebrated/infamous "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male" as the starting point for his play. The treatment, which was in fact nontreatment, began in 1932 and continued until 1972 (even after the discovery of

penicillin in the 1940s) so that the effects of the disease could be recorded. The play is set in 1932, when both Nurse Evers and her patients believe the men are or are about to be treated for "bad blood," and 1946, when an attempt is made to keep the men from the penicillin which has now become available at antivenereal clinics. These scenes are intercut with direct statements from Miss Evers's testimony at the 1972 Senate hearing on the project, and an Epilogue in which Miss Evers ("What kind of friend could do what you did?") and the doctors are accused by the crippled Willie.

The group here are four men (representing the 400-odd study participants) who are held together not by their work (farming) but by their band, which they name Miss Evers's Boys, and their desire to dance and play their way out of the hardscrabble world in which they live. The two doctors—the black scientist from Tuskegee and the white one from Washington—might be villains in a doctrinaire play, but here it is never clear how self-deluding they are in their quests for racial equality and scientific knowledge. The moral center of the play is Miss Evers, the dedicated nurse, the friend of the men she looked after, who finally recognized what she was part of but, after the death of a man to whom she belatedly gave penicillin, "just fell in line." Although Feldshuh's focus is on the individuals involved, the play inevitably chronicles a horror story, an American shame perpetrated while we were all being properly outraged at Nazi science.

GERALD WEALES

Anne Porter

Listening to the Crows

Infant in a pinewood
Not owning anything
Not knowing
A single word

I lay in a basket
Listening to the shiny
Crows outside my window
Who spoke with one another
In a strange tribal language

And even now
When I wake up early
And overhear the crows
Calling to one another
In the cool floods of the air

The deeps of infancy
Open again within me
Their wonder washes me
And instantly

My heart grows light
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20 December 1991: 751

A Christmas alphabet

A is for the angels that brought tidings of peace and goodwill toward all men and women.

B is for Betjeman, the only poet to introduce into a nativity poem the Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane.

C is for Chesterton the schoolboy, whose poem about a wild-eyed savage ended with a line that was to summarize his future attitude to spiritual matters: "The savage prays to the presence within him that has prompted the heart to pray."

D is for Dickens, who when he looked up at the Christmas tree saw also the tree of Calvary, and imagined that he heard a voice saying: "This, in commemoration of the law of love and kindness....This, in remembrance of Me."

E is for the evangelists Matthew and Luke and the amazing narrative economy with which they compress the events of the Nativity and Epiphany into less than 1,000 words.

F is for the field mice in *The Wind and the Willows*, who sing a carol about the stable at Bethlehem and maintain that the animals present there were the first to cry Nowell.

G is for ghosts, of which Dr. Johnson declared that all argument was against them, but all belief for them.

H is for George Herbert, the seventeenth-century poet, who decided to add his horse to the animals at the crib.

I is for the Incarnation, whose effect on a materialist society is vividly described by Forster in *Howard's End*: "How many of these vacillating shoppers and tired assistants realized that it was a divine event which drew them together?"

J is for Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, who has often been allowed to fade into the background and about whom there is not even one poem in the *New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*.

K is for Martin Luther King, Jr., who once preached in a winter sermon in London that a street-sweeper should sweep streets as Shakespeare wrote poetry—and then exhorted the congregation: "Be the best, whatever you are."

L is for Lucy, the saint whom the children of Lombardy invoke to have their New Year wishes granted and whom Eliot included in his last published Ariel poem, called *The Cultivation of Christmas Trees*.





M is for Milton, whose reference to the Three Kings as “the star-led Wizards” indicated by his spelling that they were Wise Men as well as Magi.

N is for Cardinal Newman, who draws attention to the fact that, apart from the natiivities of Jesus and his mother, the church only celebrates one other birth—that of John the Baptist.

O is for the orangey-apple Christmas smell in greengrocers’ shops, noted by Arnold Bennett in his journal.

P is for the plum pudding which Edmund Gosse’s father, in a fit of antipopery, threw out of the window because he considered it an idolatrous, Romish confection.

Q is for the perennial question asked by every author—“Why do I write?”—and answered in our century by Sylvia Plath, aged fifteen: “Because there is a voice within me that will not be still.”

R is for “the real world of theology and horses”—a line which comes from Auden’s 1948 poem titled *The Age of Anxiety*.

S is for the Star of the Sea, one of the most beautiful titles bestowed on the Virgin Mary and brought about by a happy slip when a medieval copyist transcribed *stilla maris* (drop of the sea) as *Stella Maris*.

T is for Thackeray, whose yearly pleasure on 27 December was to sit up in bed for two hours with *The Times*, checking every pantomime that was on in London, from Drury Lane to the Britannia at Hoxton.

U is for the ugly duckling in the Hans Christian Andersen fairy-tale that is transformed into a regal swan.

V is for Virgil, who in his Fourth Eclogue foretells the coming of a Savior, and whose own birthday, like that of the Emperor Augustus, was registered in the calendar of the Empire as a saint’s day.

W is for the Wakefield morality play in which a shepherd cries out, “Christ’s cross me speed, and Saint Nicholas,” and so telescopes the birth and death of Jesus into a single line.

X is for Xmas, which most dictionaries until the late nineteenth century printed as “Christmass.”

Y is for Yeats and his poem about “The Mother of God,” which contains the following phrase: “I bore the Heavens in my Womb.”

Z is for Zacharias, the elderly father of John the Baptist, whose anxieties about his wife’s confinement were reassured by the words “Fear not”—words repeated by the same angel at the Annunciation and later to the shepherds on the hills.

Neville Braybrooke



Scientific annunciations

THE VIRGIN AND THE MOUSETRAP

Essays in Search of the Soul of Science

Chet Raymo

Viking Penguin, \$18.95, 199 pp.

THE JOY OF INSIGHT

Passions of a Physicist

Victor Weisskopf

Basic Books, \$24.95, 328 pp.

Nancy M. Haegel



One of the joys of university life is watching young people discover something about which they become passionate. Students find themselves finishing an experiment on Friday night, rummaging in dusty library stacks, or arguing politics until dawn. A determined few become passionate about science, about physics. They become scientists, physicists, maybe even professors. Chet Raymo and Victor Weisskopf are both scientists, professors, and authors who are eager to share new insights about their science, their lives, their passions.

Raymo's *The Virgin and the Mousetrap: Essays in Search of the Soul of Science* has the more intriguing title, inspired by a fifteenth-century Flemish altarpiece depicting the Annunciation. As this event unfolds, Mary is reading. Joseph is at work, a clever mousetrap on his bench. What Raymo, professor of physics and astronomy at Stonehill College in Massachusetts, sees in this picture, and what he attempts to explore in his essays, is the harmony between the material and the spiritual, between Joseph's new creation and the new creation implied in the message of the angel.

Recent annunciations from the scientific world—new forms of life and new styles of weapons, too much ozone in our cities and not enough in the upper atmosphere—

have left society reeling. Raymo's goal is to discover "the soul of science," to connect his own life in all its dimensions to the seemingly impersonal, and often inconceivably small, large, or dangerous phenomena that engage scientists. "These essays do not attempt to explain science, but to experience it, to discover ways in which science enriches our personal lives, not materialistically but spiritually."

The material and the spiritual meet in a number of reflections on physics and biology, astronomy and evolution. One is reminded of the noted essayist Stephen Jay Gould as Raymo writes, "the age of petty miracles is past. We can no longer look upon ourselves as the favored children of gods. The universe, we now understand, is vast beyond our reckoning, and we are ordinary perhaps even typical fragments of that universe." Gould and Raymo share an intellectual pleasure in science, a realization of its limitations, and an awareness of how modern science has changed our visions of ourselves. Gould delights those who wish to be challenged, perhaps even discomforted. Raymo's writing is gentler, more spiritual. He offers a more comforting, though perhaps less challenging welcome to modern science.

The book consists of twenty-one essays, each seemingly predestined to be a short ten pages in length. Despite the brevity, most of the highly exciting and controversial topics in modern science make an appearance. Certainly a most exciting topic today is the ability of scientists to unlock "the code of life" in the molecules of human DNA. These molecules can now be visualized through computer-generated images that appear in popular science magazines. Raymo looks at these images and sees Gothic cathedrals: "When we enter a Gothic cathedral we have the sense that every visible component of the structure has a job to do. The Gothic architects achieved a unity

of form and function that has seldom been surpassed. Something similar is afoot in the computer images of the molecules of life. Here, too, there is an attempt to represent unseen realities with visible images. Here, too, is an almost mystical vision of a hidden harmony established throughout the cosmos, the unsuppressible capacity of substance to generate self." The analogy is striking and illuminating.

The limitations of essay length are felt most clearly when Raymo attempts to tackle "the big ones"—environmental concerns, the strategic defense initiative (more popularly known as Star Wars), animal rights. These subjects don't lend themselves to quick survey or brief reflection. Raymo makes an admirable attempt to shine light on topics that need it, but the intensity is too low to penetrate much darkness.

Raymo does describe well the alienation from modern science that is reflected today in tendencies to either deny or deify it. A surprising number of people are still confused by the claims of "creation science," while Hans Küng's latest book reminds us that "modernity," with its enshrinement of science, has left us lonely and unfulfilled. In the face of the temptation to escape from this paradox into either fundamentalism or nihilism, Raymo cautions that "the often anthropomorphic forms of the older faiths are insufficiently capacious to encompass what we have learned about the world, and science is too tentative an instrument to be deified." There is a great wisdom here in seeking a balance in our search for meaning, offered by someone who has attempted to walk with balance through dangerous territory. "The unexamined quest for knowledge is hemmed with peril," he observes, while concluding that we have no choice but to proceed with caution.

Victor Weisskopf would probably agree. In his autobiography, this talented physicist and teacher recounts the path that took him

through an education with some of the greatest physicists of our time, to Los Alamos and a front-row seat for the first test of the atomic bomb, to leadership roles in working for nuclear arms control. The road has at times been perilous, but Weisskopf has walked it with grace, honesty, and joy.

The Joy of Insight begins with memories from a Vienna childhood and concludes with the reflections of an MIT emeritus professor. Music and science, along with his wife Ellen, with whom he shared his life for fifty-seven years, and his family, are the loves of Weisskopf's life and the focus of his story. In contrast to Raymo's poetic style, Weisskopf writes simply and candidly. There's little poetry, and little polemic—just wonderful stories from a man who has led a most interesting life. It made me envy his friends.

And his friends have been many. Weisskopf had the good fortune to come of age during the "golden years" of modern physics and had the ability to take advantage of it. He worked, at various times, with Heisenberg, Bloch, Schroedinger, Pauli, and Bohr, men who made seminal contributions to physics. Weisskopf refers to the Danish physicist Neils Bohr as his "intellectual father." In addition to physics, he learned from Bohr to widely apply the concept of *complementarity*, a term coined by Bohr to explain the apparent contradiction in physics between the wave-like and particle-like properties of the electron. "Neils Bohr taught me to appreciate the importance of different, even seemingly contradictory avenues to human experience. He generalized the idea of complementarity to fields of human experience outside of physics, such as ethics, music, art, and religion.... As examples of complementarity, he often mentioned the scientific versus the poetic approach to an experience or justice versus compassion or psychology versus neurophysiology."

This theme follows Weisskopf throughout his life. A man who lectures on the scientific origin of the universe concludes by playing part of Hayden's *Creation* "to demonstrate another way of describing the same event." Nonreligious, he still reports a "brush with the irrational" as his yarmulke mysteriously disappears in a gust of wind in an Israeli cemetery. A nonob-servant Jew, he serves in the Pontifical

Academy of Science. Regarding Pope John Paul II he writes, "Altogether, he is a friendly, outgoing person who does not use his authoritative position to intimidate his partners in a discussion. Of course, we thoroughly disagreed on many subjects...."

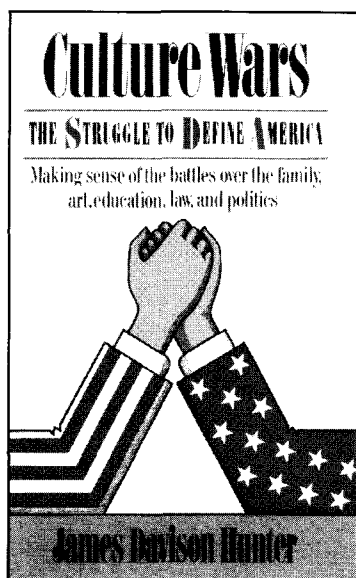
Complementarity took a new turn in Weisskopf's life when he, like many other gifted scientific refugees from Europe, joined the Manhattan Project. He describes his thoughts during the Los Alamos years without the protective editing in hindsight that one might expect. An initial eagerness to participate in the project gives way to a more complicated psychology. Secret hopes that the scientific difficulties would be insurmountable slowly evolve into a strong desire simply to achieve the goal. By the time the Nazis were defeated, Weisskopf was fully engaged by the challenge of the work. In reflecting back, he is neither defensive nor preachy, just honest. "In retrospect, I have often been disappointed that, at the time, the thought of quitting did not even cross my mind." When the bomb exploded at Trinity, Weisskopf was at an open observation pit

ten miles from the site.

Weisskopf has made major contributions to basic science. He provides wonderfully clear descriptions of the significant advances in nuclear and atomic physics in which he played a role. During the years that followed the war, he returned to academic research, taught physics at MIT, and spent four years as director general of CERN, the European international high energy physics laboratory. He was also widely active in the political opposition to the growing arms race. He helped found the Federation of American Scientists and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to educate scientists and the public about nuclear policies and arms control.

All of this is recounted in the same engaging and transparent style. In the final chapter of the book, Weisskopf takes readers on a delightful tour of his collection of classical music, a setting for some of his best reflections on the balance in life that is the theme of *The Joy of Insight* as well as *The Virgin and the Mousetrap*. Weisskopf has lived with delight, and his autobiography is a delight to share.

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THE LAST PRIESTS IN AMERICA

Conversations with Remarkable Men

Tim Unsworth

Crossword, \$19.95, 281 pp.

John C. Cort

We have here two books, each about one priest, and one book about forty-two priests. The latter is by Tim Unsworth, a columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter*. Over half his priests are from the Chicago diocese and they include a cardinal, two bishops, several who quit and one, a convicted pedophile, recently released from prison. Very much of a cross section, but most of them come off as highly admirable men.

The format is similar to that made famous by Studs Terkel, mainly taped interviews, not exactly "conversations" because you don't hear Unsworth's voice except in the introductions. There we are reminded again and again that vocations are decreasing, resignations are continuing (by 2005 we should be down to 21,000 diocesan priests from a high of 35,000 in 1966), and even God is helpless to do anything about it. Or so Unsworth seems to think.

His solution, also repeated again and again, either in his voice or that of interviewees, is to drop the celibacy requirement and ordain women. Otherwise, these are samples of "the last priests in America." Unsworth is honest enough to quote retired Bishop William McManus, "That's an

awful title! When the book comes out I'm going to review it and give it a bad review."

I can't give it a bad review. Unsworth is a good reporter and a readable writer, and his selections include some of the best, if not the last, priests in America. And some of the anecdotes scattered among five "interludes" are hilarious. But he doesn't sell me on the death-knell of celibacy. As father of a large family, I could never question the common sense of St. Paul's words in I Corinthians (7:32): "The unmarried man is busy with the Lord's affairs, concerned with pleasing the Lord; but the married man is busy with this world's demands and occupied with pleasing his wife." And children.

Nor am I convinced that all the resignations are necessarily a bad thing. It is obvious that many of the priests who quit did not belong in the priesthood. Those of us who are old enough must have noticed that the priesthood used to be an excellent career ladder for impoverished young men who wanted a good education and a job that assured them security, prestige, and, finally, pastoral authority and power. When the prestige, authority, and power faded, and that's not too bad a thing either, the job lost much of its appeal. Little was left but the pain and pleasure of "pleasing the Lord."

Many of Unsworth's priests testify to the pleasure that may be gained from the latter by those who apply themselves, men like Dan Cantwell, Jack Egan, Dennis Geaney, Bryan Hehir, and Bishops McManus and Lucker. Remarkably few complain about loneliness or lack of job satisfaction, although Unsworth is clearly eager to hear their confessions.

Bishop McManus is one of those who strike the positive note. He observes that "we still have 53,000 priests in the United States and just over 19,000 parishes." That means some of the teaching or monastic priests might have to do parish duty on the weekends, but that's not too bad a thing either. The bishop also contributes a clue as to how to derive more pleasure and less

pain, and loneliness, from the priesthood. He says, "We have to make justice our paramount virtue....If there's anything missing in the church today, it's a sense of justice."

And many of the other priests confirm my conviction that if you want to be happy, and almost never lonely, devote yourself to the pursuit of justice.

This conviction is further confirmed by the other two books, biographies of the late Monsignor Geno Baroni and the still living and lively Monsignor John Egan, who is covered in Frisbie's book. Lawrence O'Rourke, a competent D.C. newspaperman, does a good job with Baroni, the first Catholic priest to join the '65 march from Selma to Montgomery. Under President Jimmy Carter, Baroni became assistant secretary of Housing and Urban Development, attaining the highest government rank of any priest ever to have served the U.S. government.

Baroni first made news in 1960 as a curate at St. Augustine's, a black parish in Washington, D.C., where he established a multiservice center for his multineedy parishioners. Later he gravitated more to promoting the interests of white ethnics and trying to spread oil on the rough water that separated them from the blacks. A charismatic but disorganized type, both in thought and action, Baroni was not always a happy man, and part of this was the result of trying to reconcile the strains and stresses of public office with the strains and stresses of priestly office. Most certainly, the two are not easily compatible, and the incompatibility probably contributed to his death of cancer at the early age of fifty-three.

Monsignor Egan seems to have had a happier time of it. Like Bishop McManus and so many Chicago priests of that era, he was inspired by Reynold Hillenbrand, rector of Mundelein Seminary in the late thirties and early forties. Margery Frisbie suffers heavy going with some of the material, but her story picks up drama and excitement when she gets into Jack Egan's finest and one of his most painful hours, namely, his battle in 1958 with Mayor Daley the First and the University of Chicago over the shafting they gave the poor black community that bordered the university's sacred precincts.

This was the battle that split the

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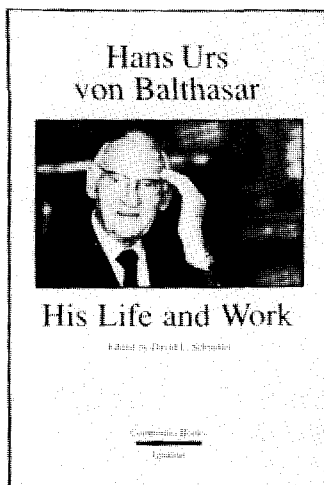
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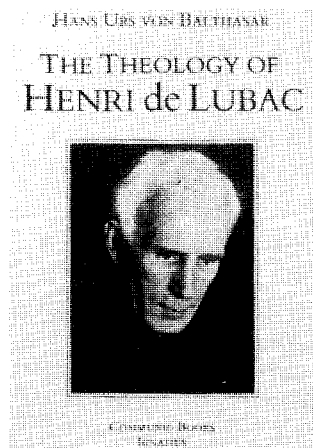
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Hillenbrand priests in two, with Hillenbrand giving Egan a tongue-lashing at a meeting of the group. But Egan was right and Hillenbrand was wrong, in my opinion, and nothing speaks more eloquently in Egan's behalf, or in behalf of Cardinal Samuel Stritch and his doughty chancellor, Monsignor Edward Burke, who backed him, than the losing fight those three put up against the city and the university.

In all three books the figure, or shadow, of that amazing and tragic man, Reynold Hillenbrand, distracts one's attention. None of us who were ever moved, even mesmerized, by his lofty eloquence will ever forget him, and I cannot help but close with a quote that sums up the best in the men covered in these books, from a talk of Hillenbrand's at the National Liturgical Week in 1945:

People the world over are sick of individualism, of being sundered from others, of the tragic loss that comes from thinking and acting alone. They are sick of individualistic, subjective piety because it lacks depth and vision. They are sick of the individualism that has undone so many homes.... People are sick of the individualism that has made of political life an unspeakably sordid thing; sick of the stinking individualism in our economic life that has denied to the worker his rightful place in industrial life; sick, above all, of the individualism in international life that has left the world a shambles.

The man was flawed perhaps (who isn't?), but nobody today says it any better.

bizarre gathering place in Toledo, Spain, called Café de los Locos. They discuss many topics: panhandling and theft, love and violence, metaphysics and music, all parading in intertwined anecdotes, recollections, and philosophical dissertations.

Although *Locos* was enthusiastically reviewed by Mary McCarthy and others, it disappeared from the literary scene without a trace. That is, until the Dalkey Archive Press, an imprint in Illinois, rediscovered it more than fifty years later in 1988 and brought it back to light. It was an immediate sensation! A *New Yorker* critic said that although "Alfau wrote with a confidence astonishing in a twenty-six-year-old, beneath the comedy and the surrealistic effects, and the glare and shadows," the pages were inhabited by a "whispered secret," a mysterious light—as if the author was "gestur[ing] to his public from his side of the peculiar one-way mirror that is reflexive art."

Read before the Second World War, while John Dos Passos, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dashiell Hammett, Ernest Hemingway, and Raymond Chandler had their fingerprints on every kind of narrative, the book is an extraordinarily compelling experiment. Today, it's a revelation! One can see Alfau's style in Italo Calvino, Vladimir Nabokov, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, Spain's novelist Luis Martin-Santos, and the Argentine fabulist Jorge Luis Borges. Yet none of them knew about Alfau. McCarthy herself, in one of her final essays, wrote an epilogue for the 1988 edition in which she explained how, when she first read *Locos* and reviewed it for the *Nation*, it changed her way of perceiving literature. "It was my fatal type," she wrote. "What I fell in love with, all unknowingly, was the modernist novel as detective story." Alfau includes

LOST IN QUEENS

LOCOS

A Comedy of Gestures

Felipe Alfau

Vintage International, \$8.95, 206 pp.

CHROMOS

Felipe Alfau

Vintage International, \$11, 348 pp.

ILAN STAVANS

Here is a short c.v. about an intriguing literary curiosity. Felipe Alfau, a Spanish writer born in Barcelona in 1902 and raised in Guernica and Madrid, emigrated to New York City in 1916, at age fourteen. His family gave him a Catholic education and a sense of irony about things Iberian. The move to the United States was painful: he felt misplaced, lonely. During his youth, he was for a while a music critic for *La Prensa*, an up-and-coming Spanish-language newspaper in Manhattan. And after a few years, picking up the native tongue in the street, he wrote a novel in English.

The year was 1928. The title of his volume, *Locos: A Comedy of Gestures*. When trying to sell it, he found that nobody quite understood its labyrinthine structure and metafictional devices. Perhaps because of its avant-garde technique and its Iberian English, people felt uncomfortable with the book. It was clearly ahead of its time. Meanwhile, in 1929 Doubleday published his children's book, *Old Tales from Spain*, a compendium of invented stories about bullfighting and the Spanish way of life and imagination. Admittedly, Alfau did both texts not because he wanted to become a professional writer but in order to earn money.

The price of *Locos*, which finally got published in 1936 by Farrar & Reinhart, was \$2.50. The publisher paid Alfau \$250 for the manuscript and included it as the first title of the new series "Discoverers," distributed in autographed copies to a select club of subscribers. Readers who dared to open it found that it had no conventional plot. The author himself meets the characters—Lunarito, Gastón Bejarano, Don Benito, Juan Chinelato, Doña Micaela, García, Don Graciano Báez, Sister Carmela, and Father Inocencio—in a

REVIEWERS

NANCY M. HAEGEL is an associate professor of materials science at UCLA and a Kellogg National Fellow.

JOHN C. CORT is a Boston-area writer and frequent contributor to *Commonweal*.

ILAN STAVANS, a Mexican novelist and scholar, has recently translated Felipe Alfau's collected poetry. The volume is titled *Sentimental Songs* (The Dalkey Archive Press).

Sherlock Holmes in his cast, and surrounds the story with the suspense derived from the questions: Will the characters disobey their creator? Can they fight for freedom? In Italy, France, and Holland, immediate translation followed, and in Spain it was published by the prestigious publishing house Seix Barral.

Chromos, the only other novel by the author and one which not a single publisher wanted back in the forties, only saw the light in 1990. It subsequently was nominated for the National Book Award. Paul West, one of the judges, wrote in the citation: "Finished in 1948, [the novel] sets an imaginary Alfau dreaming in front of old calendar pictures by the light of a match. Before the flame gutters, a real novel has come to him: a tart and eloquent, sly and feisty kaleidoscope of New York Spaniards, wrought in fire amid the *cante hondo* of the heart by a hungry artist almost lost, unpublished, to oblivion." Full of fiction-within-fiction devices, it contains almost the same cast of characters as *Locos*. The theme now moves around a bunch of actors, fantasists, mathematicians, singers, guitar players, all of Iberian origin, who endlessly discuss life, physics, and relativity in a Manhattan that hardly notices them. And indeed, as in *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Don Quixote*, within the novel there's another novel, as if art suddenly decided to stop describing life and began to imitate itself.

To think of Alfau's response to his literary rediscovery is to invoke J.D. Salinger and even Pynchon. The three have done everything to evade publicity and escape the plight of fame. Since they live in virtual seclusion, biographical information about them is scarce, and it seems that they actively perpetuate their own mystery. The author of *Locos*, who is retired and lives in a nursing home in Rego Park, Queens, has as his only interest now to leave this world as soon as possible. His relevance today comes from his disturbing, remarkable voice. The language question is fundamental in understanding him. Why did he switch to English after having written journalistic pieces in Spanish? The reason, I think, is rather simple: back in the twenties, he knew he was an avant-garde writer, and that to be appreciated, he would have to appear in what was then—and may not

be anymore—New York City's major vehicle of communication. At the time, his motherland was engaged in a cruel and ultimately meaningless Civil War, and any artistic product read in Manhattan or Paris, written by a Spaniard, had to be concerned with ideology and the battle against fascism. Although a Francisco Franco supporter, he was not interested in the boredom of politics. His decision to change languages places him in the same category with Nabokov, Jerzy Kosinski, Joseph Conrad, the U.S. poet laureate Joseph Brodsky, and the Cuban novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante. Hence, he belongs to that new branch of Hispanic literature, written in the United States, that must be translated into Spanish in order to be read in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, or Barcelona. But not only did Alfau jump from one code to another; he actually made the linguistic dilemma one of his central themes.

His odyssey symbolizes the fate of Hispanic writers in the United States. When compared to other ethnic minorities—Jewish, African, Asian, Italian—it seems that the writers of Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Chicano background find it difficult to enter the literary mainstream. Although the founding Hispanic authors hark back to 1848, when two-fifths of the Mexican territory was sold to the White House, today most people know more about the Hispanic relatives of William Carlos Williams, George Santayana, or John Dos Passos than about the art of an Hispanic-North

American author. This country's Eurocentrism (understood as the heritage of mainly Italy, France, Great Britain, Eastern Europe, and even Russia) reduces the chance of paying attention to what goes on south of the Rio Grande. Also, since 1492, when Christopher Columbus first set foot in what would be called the Americas, there have been two different stories cohabiting in the vast continent: the success of the North and the defeat of the South. That mere fact makes it even harder for Anglo-Saxon culture in New York to recognize as equal the inheritors of Luis de Gongora and Lope de Vega. But the value of the author of *Locos* transcends egalitarian feelings and ethnic qualities. It stands on its own as the contribution of someone living in the abyss existing between two realities, in the margin, on the edge. His work belongs to two distinct traditions and thus has a dual referential code. It's the result of a personal, linguistic, and cultural identity that is difficult to grasp.

Felipe Alfau is a product of that no-man's-land reality—somehow, like Kafka's characters, he is a frontier inhabitant. Indeed, the contemporary reader should be thankful for this (re)discovery, and I hope the enthusiastic words in this review will encourage a few to approach the two magical volumes. I am envious of those who for the first time will be enchanted by this genius, a curiosity and a prophet who foresaw the literary tastes of the future.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 738)

alumni of Jesuit colleges and universities. I was lucky enough to have had some great teachers at Boston College, and, though my graduation class will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 1992, I feel that I am still drawing many lessons from the Jesuits. But there is one major mark of a Jesuit education that is missing: I have not experienced the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius. I once told a Jesuit friend that I thought it was possible to be a good Jesuit without benefit of ordination. One way is to hang around one or two Jesuits. The other is to experience the *Exercises*.

I think all future leaders of Jesuit universities who are not members of the Society would benefit from that experience. I await the day when a lay man or woman of deep Ignatian inspiration becomes the first non-Jesuit president of one of our schools. I'll be the first to send congratulations.

GENE "TITO" ROMAN

Schools and souls

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Though I found myself sharing many of Thomas Troy's concerns and questions, I can't help taking issue with a few of his assertions:

(1) St. Ignatius stated clearly in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus that educational ministry was a work worthy of the Society's commitment precisely because it is a means to save souls. This concern flows directly from his *Spiritual*

Exercises. Thus I was perplexed by Mr. Troy's seemingly skeptical approach to current claims that the *Exercises* hold the key to the continuing of the Jesuit tradition in education in our own day.

(2) No Jesuit would draw the hard-and-fast distinction between exercising a preferential option for the poor and working for the salvation of souls that Mr. Troy does. Adrien Denoustier, S.J., has argued cogently that the very founding of Jesuit colleges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was interwoven with a desire to give socioeconomically disadvantaged students the opportunity to engage in university studies ("The First Companions and the Poor," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, March 1989).

(3) The sentence quoted from the work of William McInnes, S.J.—"a wave of anti-intellectualism rolled across the Society of Jesus"—rings false to me. The vast majority of U.S. Jesuits continue to minister in high schools and colleges. In my Province [Maryland] alone, more than twenty young Jesuits are pursuing doctoral studies in subjects as varied as linguistics and anthropology. In the Society as I know it, there has been no wholesale rejection of the educational apostolate or of the importance of intellectual development and excellence.

(4) Jesuit commitment to justice is not, as Mr. Troy writes, at odds with "a life of scholarship, learning, *la vie intellectuelle*." Consider the six Jesuits murdered in San Salvador: a university administrator, a librarian, a catechist, a professor of social psychology, a professor of theology, and the superior of the Jesuit community. They died precisely because of what they spoke,

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wrote, and taught. No more telling sign could be asked to measure the current vibrancy and seriousness of the Jesuit ministry.

I join Mr. Troy in asking for open dialogue on the future of Jesuit education, but the discussion should not begin with an assumption that the work of secondary and postsecondary education is no longer near and dear to the Society's heart, or that the Jesuit commitment to that work conflicts with the basic desire of Ignatius and his Company to show a special love for those with no one to minister to them.

ED BECKETT, S.J.

The writer, a Jesuit Scholastic, teaches at St. Joseph's Preparatory School in Philadelphia.

Adaptable Jesuits

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Regarding "Jesuit Colleges Without Jesuits" by Thomas F. Troy, I am puzzled. Aside from the fact that the article is filled with gratuitous assumptions and factual errors, it invents new terminology ("education for others"), and can in no sense be taken to be an analysis of Jesuit identity in a contemporary American Jesuit college or university. What was his point?

Apparently, in his nostalgia for what he perceives to have once been Jesuit education, the author has failed to note that the world has changed since 1937 when he was a freshman at the College of the Holy Cross. A distinguishing charism of the Jesuits is their adaptability to changing times and circumstances; happily, they are not frozen in their categories!

The author's skepticism, based on his nostalgic longing for the past, does not alter the fact that contemporary Jesuit education does what Jesuit higher education has always done: it serves the church by advancing intellectual life. The changes are intended to achieve that same end within the changing times and circumstances of contemporary culture and American society.

(REV.) PAUL S. TIPTON, S.J.

The writer is president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.



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The author replies:

Ed Beckett would paint us into several opposing black and white holes, but I won't let him. Nowhere did I draw a "hard-and-fast" distinction between the "preferential option for the poor" and saving souls. There's a grayness there. In 1985 the Jesuit general warned Jesuits against reducing that option to the "dimensions of the sociopolitical."

Two, Beckett says he knows of no "wholesale [Jesuit] rejection of the educational apostolate." Neither do I, but it has been much questioned. Three, Beckett has me putting the Jesuit commitment to justice "at odds" with scholarship. No, but education "for others" (see below) gives

education not intrinsic but extrinsic value.

As for my skepticism about the *Spiritual Exercises* as the "key" to the continuance of Jesuit education, my explanation is simple and personal: when I was at Holy Cross about 95 percent of my professors were Jesuits. Today's Crusaders rarely see a Jesuit. How then can they be molded by those *Exercises*? By professors with little or no knowledge of Ignatius? Will rhetoric, in great supply these celebratory days, do the job?

That last question is the answer to Paul Tipton's "What was his point?" As for his comment about my "invent[ing] new terminology," I must give him his point. Looking through my notes, I discover that "education for others" is apparently my

invention—though I modestly think it better than Father Arrupe's unwieldy "men for others: the paramount objective of Jesuit education," and briefer than Father Kolvenbach's "our purpose in education is to form men and women for others." Still, I should not have seemingly ascribed my phrasing to Father Arrupe.

One last point. Dr. Ferkiss thinks the problem is not so much a matter of personnel but of curriculum. It is both. Basically the modern Jesuit college has no body of knowledge it wants to impart. It has left that job to its academic departments and their chieftains. It only arbitrates their competing claims for graduation credits. That role will kill Jesuit and Catholic education.

THOMAS F. TROY

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